

July Newsletter

Hello Everyone,

I think it might now be officially Summer! Hope everyone is keeping cool when the weather is warm- and keeping dry when the skies are stormy...

It seems incredible that it has been over three months since we were last able to hold any of our social activities here at Assist. I know that for many people this time has been a real challenge, and the relaxing of the lock down rules cannot come soon enough. However, to keep members and volunteers safe we are unfortunately still not able to restart any groups just yet, and the office remains closed to all but staff and pre-arranged volunteers. I know this may seem frustrating as pubs and restaurants are set to open this month, but please be assured we are working behind the scenes to plan a safe and risk reducing way to bring people back in, and will keep you updated as soon as anything changes.

In the meantime! We are continuing to experiment with using Zoom and other online tools to come together and are pleased to announce our first Virtual **Tea and Talks** will be taking place on Monday 20th July at 2pm! Through the magic of Zoom, local nature photographer and specialist, Luke Blazejewski will be hosting the talk, using his own work and words to “illustrate the beauty and diversity of life we have on our doorstep.”



As usual, the lovely team at Withington Coop on Copson street will be supporting this session with cakes and treats (delivered to your door!), so to put your name down, please either send an email to withingtonassist@gmail.com, or give the office a call **(0161 434 9216)** for more information. As long as you have the internet on either a laptop, smartphone or tablet, you will be able to join, and we have a lovely team of friendly (and patient!) telephone volunteers who can help you practice using Zoom beforehand.

Exercise Classes have now been running on Zoom for two weeks, with Ruby working the group hard on a Friday morning, checking in from the comfort of their own homes! The new exercise sheets that build on the first set will be out next week, and for anyone who is not currently part of the group but would like to be, please get in touch.

Positive Living Group falls on Monday 6th July this month, with Debra discussing with the group (Whatsapp video and individual calls), how they're feeling about the easing of the lockdown, any fears arising from the idea of getting out again, and ideas for working through those positively. These will be shared next newsletter.

Digital Phone In: we now have three regular telephone volunteers helping members access Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp or simply getting to grips with their phone/tablet/computer etc. Please get in touch if you would like any support in this area.



Lunch Club continues to run as a delivery service, and we now have 38 members regularly receiving a fresh, Debbie-cooked, Volunteer-delivered meal once a week... To help support the service, Southway housing have very kindly given us a donation which we are using to make the deliveries more environmentally friendly and cost efficient, by buying reusable food containers and cotton carrier bags. They have been passing on some free frozen meals via Cracking Good Food. If anyone would like some for their freezer, let me know.



Volunteers are continuing their brilliant work supporting our member by, shopping for food supplies, collecting prescriptions, posting letters, offering digital help, delivering lunches and making many, many telephone calls. We currently have over 50 active volunteers supporting 180 members and we can't thank them enough. There will be a Volunteers get together/training session on Monday 13th July (on Zoom). Please get in touch to join.

Meet the Team: Libby Spencer

"I started volunteering at Assist 35 years ago when I left university and before I got my first job.



Margaret Redhouse the then co-ordinator sent me to befriend a lovely lady on Yew tree road, who had no family nearby. I ended up visiting her for about 15 years until she sadly died. She was very interesting company, her husband was a reporter for the MEN during the war. She was widowed young and worked hard as a waitress in the Manchester coffee shops such as the Kardomah, to support her son. Since then most of my volunteering has been dog-walking as that fitted in with working. I walked a lovely dog called

Pebbles for 15 years until she died last year. I have also enjoyed being a trustee and have been Chair of Assist twice, but as I work full-time I felt unable to give the time required. I work in social housing with a particular interest in older persons and extra care housing. I am currently working for Great Places."

Kath McKenna: In May we received the sad news that Mary Kathleen McKenna had passed away at the age of 102. One of our oldest members, she will be greatly missed. Here are a few words from Barbara, a friend of Kath's and fellow lunch clubber:

"Over the last couple of years, I've been lucky to get to know Kath well through spending time with her on Tuesday lunches, dancing at St Cuthbert's and outings. I loved to chat with Kath and she was always so interested in people and life, she was a breath of fresh air and I will miss her very much I enjoyed her account of Withington through the years and could almost hear her talking as I read it."



Please find an extract from Kathleen's interview for Withington Civic Society included in this envelope, and if anyone would like to read the full document, I can arrange a copy.

Take care everyone, stay positive and stay safe, and keep in touch,

Amelia and all at Assist